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Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council votes unanimously to continue UNOMIG mandate until 7 March at existing authorized strength; ready to consider further strengthening of Georgia mission, and notes options for possible peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia.

+ Secretary-General, in letter to Security Council, says he would not hesitate to initiate use of close air support if UNPROFOR were attacked while implementing plans to rotate peace-keepers in Srebrenica and Zepa and to open Tuzla airport.

+ Co-Chairman of International Conference on Former Yugoslavia says "it is hard to be optimistic" about prospects for peace agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina; tells Security Council that parties differ over small percentage of territory.

+ In report on ONUMOZ, Secretary-General says serious problems remain in implementation of Mozambican peace agreement; calls for establishment of police contingent in ONUMOZ.

+ Challenge for 1995 World Social Development Summit is to allay fears of social disorder, Secretary-General tells Preparatory Committee; says solidarity is vital if current problems are to be tackled.

+ UNOSOM II Force Commander orders investigation of clash in Somalia today between Somali gunmen and United States Marines; eight Somalis killed, 12 injured; no American casualties.

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The Security Council today decided to continue the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 7 March within the numbers authorized late last year. However, the Council declared its readiness, within that period, to consider any recommendation from the Secretary-General to further increase the strength of the Mission to limits specified earlier, and noted the options described in his recent report for the possible establishment of a peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia.

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In unanimously adopting resolution 896 (1993), the Security Council welcomed the continued efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, in cooperation with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and with the assistance of the Russian Government as facilitator, to carry forward the peace process. The Council urged the parties to resume negotiations as soon as possible and to demonstrate stronger willingness to achieve a comprehensive political settlement.

It stressed that substantive progress must be made immediately on the political status of Abkhazia, respecting fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia, if the negotiations were to succeed and further conflict were to be avoided. The Council asked the Secretary-General to report to any progress made at upcoming negotiations in February between the parties, with special attention to circumstances which might warrant a peace-keeping force and on the modalities for such a force.

The Council recognized the grave situation in Georgia created by the presence of some 300,000 persons displaced from Abkhazia and the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return home without preconditions and in secure conditions. It also urged the parties to ensure the security of UNOMIG personnel and welcomed the readiness of the Russian Federation to assist them in that regard.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said he would not hesitate to initiate the use of close air support if the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) were attacked while implementing plans to rotate peace-keepers in Srebrenica and Zepa and to open Tuzla airport. In a letter to the Security Council dated 28 January (S/1994/94), the Secretary-General said he had delegated authority to approve a request for air support to his Special Representative, Yasushi Akashi.

United Nations planning envisaged three scenarios, he said. In the first, troops could be rotated and the airport opened with the consent of the parties. In the second, if the parties did consent, but were judged unlikely to use military force, existing UNPROFOR military assets would be used with the support, if necessary, of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air power. In the third scenario, if the parties resorted to military force, UNPROFOR would use available assets, reinforced by Member States, and NATO air power if necessary.

The Secretary-General distinguished between close air support involving the use of air power for self-defence, and air strikes for pre-emptive or punitive purposes. NATO forces were not authorized to launch the latter types of air strikes without a decision of the North Atlantic Council. The Secretary-General said he hoped that the troops could be rotated and the airport opened by agreement. However, he noted that UNPROFOR's mandate regarding "safe areas" in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, and the Force did not have to seek the consent of the parties for operations falling within its mandate. He said

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that the Bosnian parties were trying to to take advantage of UNPROFOR's presence and were increasingly questioning its impartiality. The time had come to reflect on its role, and he would soon undertake a comprehensive review of the its functions and responsibilities.

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Thorvald Stoltenberg, Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, said today it was hard to be optimistic about the prospects for an agreement to end the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He told the Security Council that failure to sign a peace agreement could mean more war, more hatred and more ethnic cleansing. However, the Chairmen worked on the basis of the belief that all three parties wanted a peace agreement and they would therefore continue efforts to get the parties to overcome the remaining hurdles to a peace agreement.

In his briefing to the Council, the Co-Chairman noted that the bulk of an agreement, including provisions covering military matters, human rights and transit, had already been worked out in meetings with the parties. However, success had not been achieved because of disagreement over a relatively small percentage of territory in Eastern, Western and Central Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats had accepted a proposal whereby an arbitration commission would make recommendations on the allocation of territory, but the Bosnian Presidency had said that it would not accept such a procedure unless the other parties withdrew their forces from the towns concerned.

In order to promote the peace process, certain confidence-building measures -- such as the establishment of hot-lines and the exchange of representatives -- had been initiated, Mr. Stoltenberg continued. A working group had been convened to consider other confidence building measures and had met in Sarajevo on 26 January. Based on its report, discussions with the three parties would resume in Geneva on 10 February.

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While significant progress has been made in Mozambique, several serious problems relating to the implementation of the general peace agreement still remain, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report on the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), dated 28 January (S/1994/89), he warned that the international community would be increasingly reluctant to continue to support the peace process in the event of further delays. A major challenge was posed, he said, by the demobilization of the 80,000 troops belonging to the Government forces and those of the Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO). The demobilized soldiers needed viable economic opportunities, and the troops joining the new army had to be incorporated into a well functioning institution.

The Secretary-General said additional resources were needed to help RENAMO transform itself into a political party. Failure to resolve the current problems in that respect could jeopardize the peace process. A United Nations-administered trust fund for a projected $10 million had been established and so far $7.5 million had been made available, but at least

$15 million was needed. He said he was exploring the possibility of setting up a more flexible funding mechanism, to cover RENAMO's further requirements.

In an addendum to the report, also dated 28 January (S/1994/89/Add.1), Mr. Boutros-Ghali recommended that the Security Council authorize the establishment of a United Nations police component as an integral part of ONUMOZ. As the peace process in Mozambique moved forward, he said, the focus should be shifted from monitoring the cease-fire to overseeing police activities. The presence of a United Nations police element could be very useful, particularly when the electoral campaign got underway, and both the Government and RENAMO had agreed to the general concept.

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Social stress was a feature of the modern world, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali told the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, as it began its first substantive session at Headquarters this morning. The challenge of the 1995 Summit was to allay fears of social disorder and to help tackle the growing social problems of persistent unemployment, poverty and inadequate expenditures on health, education and basic services.

The moral case for solidarity, for tolerance and for inclusiveness must be made, he said. Social development, the reduction of poverty, greater social integration and the creation of real jobs could only be achieved if those involved participated actively in the process. Social development required the active involvement of the State, of private organizations, such as unions and non-governmental organizations, and of all individuals as citizens and entrepreneurs.

The Secretary-General said the World Summit for Social Development would bring together Heads of State and of Government and would provide a unique opportunity for them to focus their attention on a number of key strategic objectives. The Social Summit, he pointed out, was part of a cycle of conferences which were shaping the work of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

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The Force Commander of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) has ordered an investigation of an incident earlier today in which gunfire was exchanged between Somali gunmen and United States Marines escorting staff of the United States Liaison Office at a location known as K-4. According to a United Nations spokesman, eight Somalis were killed and 12 injured. There were no American casualties.

The office of Special Representative Jonathan Howe issued a statement deeply regretting the injury and loss of life resulting from the incident, and expressing UNOSOM II's condolences to the bereaved families. "UNOSOM sincerely hopes," the statement said, "that in the meantime the process of national reconciliation to establish peace will continue in the greater interests of the Somali people."

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